

successive container bodies is reduced in the region of the spray apparatus, thereby reducing the amount of wasted spray powder.

Takeda, on the other hand, discloses a "[m]ethod for forming a thick coated film on the welded joint part of a welded metallic can." As the title implies, Takeda is concerned with coating a specific area of the can body – the welded joint – with a thick film, such as "a slurry paint" (col. 1, line 23). Use of a powder is explicitly discounted because it "does not easily adhere to the stepped portion [of the welded joint]." (Takeda, col. 1, lines 40 – 57).

Additionally, according to Takeda, using powder is problematic because it coats unwanted parts near the welded joint. As a remedy for the identified over-spray problem, Takeda suggests several Japanese publications which disclose apparatus clearly directed to limiting the areas covered by a sprayed powder. Takeda, col. 1, lines 44 – 64. There is no teaching or suggestion of recovering otherwise-wasted overspray from the entire circumferential area within the container interior.

In summary, there is no suggestion or teaching in Takeda of feeding a powder material through a welding machine, spraying the powder inside container bodies, and extracting excess powder back through the welding machine to efficiently coat can body interiors and recover excess coating material. Therefore, Takeda alone cannot render amended claim 1, or its amended dependent claims 2 – 4, obvious.

Sendzimir discloses a method for coating, but not welding, one side of a ferrous strip. The strip is rolled into a cylindrical form using various methods, then the interior is metallic-coated and the strip returned to its original flat form. There is no teaching or suggestion of feeding a spray powder through a welding machine end of a spray apparatus, spraying the powder onto the inside of container bodies, and recovering excess powder, as is done in the present invention. The only lesson that can be gleaned from Sendzimir is that a flat sheet can be "temporarily distorted into a cylindrical contour" to spray one of its sides. (Sendzimir, col 3, line 7). There is no suggestion or teaching of preceding the coating operation with a welding

operation, or extracting excess spray material afterward. Accordingly, Sendzimir alone cannot render amended claim 1, or its amended dependent claims 2 – 4, obvious.

Takahashi discloses a single method - minimizing the space between successively-coated container bodies - for reducing the amount of wasted coating material. Takahashi prefers using liquid paint instead of powder paint (col. 1, lines 17 – 23). Therefore, extracting excess coating material back through any type of device, such as the welding machine in the present invention, is not truly a viable coating-recovery option for Takahashi. The coating material is not fed through a welding machine, as done in the present invention, and excess coating material is not returned back through a welding machine. Instead, Takahashi reduces waste by decreasing the space between container bodies through which excess material can be scattered (col. 4, line 65 – col. 5, line 4).

Again, amended claim 1 of the present invention includes the steps of feeding a powder coating through the welding machine, spraying the powder, extracting excess powder back through the welding machine, and also spacing successive can bodies closely together. There is no teaching or suggestion in Takahashi of these steps to reduce the amount of wasted coating material. Hence, Takahashi alone cannot render amended claim 1 of the present invention, or any of its amended dependent claims, obvious.

Additionally, there is no suggestion or teaching to combine the lessons of Takeda, Sendzimir, and Takahashi. Takeda teaches coating the inside of can bodies in a focused area with a paint slurry. At best, Sendzimir teaches the process of metallically-coating the inside of a cylindrical body. Takahashi teaches the method of reducing the space between can bodies to reduce coating waste. Therefore, even if lessons from the three cited references were combined, claims 1 – 4 are still not rendered obvious because not one of the cited references discloses a coating process whereby coating material is fed through a welding machine and excess coating material recovered back through the welding machine. Hence, Takeda, Sendzimir, and Takahashi can not be combined in any manner to render amended claim 1 of the present

invention, or any of its dependent claims 2 - 4, obvious, and the §103(a) rejection of claims 1 - 4 should be withdrawn.

A Petition (and fee) to Revive this application, which went abandoned unintentionally on August 13, 1999, are submitted with this Amendment. Favorable consideration of claims 1 - 4 is therefore in order and is respectfully requested in the light of the foregoing discussion. Should any matter remain unresolved after entry of this Amendment, the Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to contact the Applicant's representative at the phone number listed herein.

Respectfully submitted,

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